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C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 005546

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL KPAL PTER EG IS

SUBJECT: MFA COMMENTS ON HAMAS-PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY TENSION

Classified by: ECPO Counselor John Desrocher for reasons
1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) In a meeting with poloff on July 17, MFA's Desk Officer for Palestinian Affairs Randa Labib highlighted concerns over the prospect of a peaceful disengagement from Gaza and the Hamas-Palestinian Authority (PA) dispute. She said that she had not yet seen an official report in her channels on the progress by the Egyptian General Intelligence Service (EGIS) delegation sent to broker peace between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority (PA), but she noted that any agreement to stop Qassem launches would, in her opinion, remain extremely fragile.

¶2. (C) On Abu Mazen's ability to control Hamas, Labib said that Abu Mazen cannot win. She noted that the PA is still not properly armed and thus cannot collect all of the Qassem rockets. In addition, even if Hamas and the PA reach an agreement, reporting from Hamas contacts indicates that there are elements who do not want a cease fire and want the IDF to have to withdraw from Gaza under fire. Labib added that elements in other groups, such as the PIJ, also oppose a cease fire. For example, she offered, according to her reports, a rogue PIJ element carried out the Netanya bombing.

Any of these elements can, if they choose, fire Qassem rockets from random rooftops and thereby spark more violence.

A bigger hurdle, in Labib's view, is that Hamas contacts allege that they are not required to hold fire because the Israelis have continued their attacks and arrests.

¶3. (C) Commenting on prospects for long term Hamas-PA cooperation, Labib said although Hamas alleged they will not participate in a unity government, it may still be possible to broker an agreement allowing them to participate in decision making. But, she said, Hamas contacts insist that they want a date certain for elections because they believe the PA has delayed holding elections out of fear of a loss to Hamas. Labib speculated that the PA may believe that by delaying the elections until January, disengagement might be far enough along that foreign money will be flowing into Gaza, thereby giving them an opportunity to take credit for the disengagement and perhaps, take away the edge Hamas currently enjoys.

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